

Abstract

Research shows that Korean international students, like other international students, rely on co-nationals for social support in the face of acculturative stress when studying abroad. The ethnic Korean church and the ethnic Korean student groups are two important sources of such social support. However, few studies compared these two sources to see if they predict different levels of distress. The students are divided into four groups, the students participating in both student group activities and church activities (group1, both-goers), the students only participating in the student group activities (group2, student group goers), the students only participating in church activities (group3, church goers) as well as the students participating in neither the student group activities nor the church activities (gropu4, neither-goers). The current study finds that the perceived social support is highly negatively correlated with distress, suggesting that the perceived social support predicts reduced distress in all of the four groups. Yet, ANOVA shows that the four groups did not significantly differ in perceived social support or distress. The Fisher's z transformation t test shows that only the correlations between perceived social support and distress between Group 2 (student group goers) and Group 4 (neither goers) show marginally significant difference ($r = .0643$).

Introduction

When studying abroad, international students experience acculturative stress, which lead to distress symptoms such as depression and anxiety. Studies show that they cope by seeking social support from co-nationals. The effect of social support has been inconsistent. Some found direct effect, some only found indirect, or buffering effect. This study aims to examine whether it is the different types of social support that lead to these different effects by distinguishing two major sources of social support for Korean international students, the ethnic student group and the ethnic church.

Results

The correlations between social support and distress are moderate to big in effect size and are all significant (Table 1). Yet, ANOVA shows that perceived social support and distress level did not significantly differ among four groups (Table 2). The Fisher's z transformation t test indicate that only Group 2 (student group goers) and Group 4 (neither-goers) show marginally significant difference in the main effect or the reduced distress level predicted by the perceived social support ($r = .0643$).

Table 1

Group 1		
		K10_r_sum
Social Provision Scale score sum	Pearson Correlation	-.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
	N	22
Group 2		
		K10_r_sum
Social Provision Scale score sum	Pearson Correlation	-.774**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	13
Group 3		
		K10_r_sum
Social Provision Scale score sum	Pearson Correlation	-.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	28
Group 4		
		K10_r_sum
Social Provision Scale score sum	Pearson Correlation	-.421*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036
	N	25

Table 2

		Descriptives							
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Social Provision Scale score sum	1.00	22	75.4091	8.54489	1.82178	71.6205	79.1977	59.00	86.00
Scale score sum with reverse scores	2.00	14	74.3571	12.53062	3.34895	67.1222	81.5921	56.00	94.00
	3.00	28	72.8214	11.35962	2.14677	68.4166	77.2262	53.00	93.00
	Neither Church or Student	27	72.7778	11.65970	2.24391	68.1654	77.3902	44.00	93.00
	Total	91	73.6703	10.90775	1.14344	71.3987	75.9420	44.00	94.00
K10_r_sum	1.00	22	23.3182	5.57534	1.18867	20.8462	25.7901	12.00	32.00
	2.00	13	18.4615	4.90944	1.36163	15.4948	21.4283	10.00	26.00
	3.00	29	23.0000	7.34847	1.36458	20.2048	25.7952	11.00	38.00
	Neither Church or Student	28	22.7857	7.18206	1.35728	20.0008	25.5706	10.00	44.00
	Total	92	22.3896	6.69708	.69822	20.9826	23.7565	10.00	44.00

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Provision Scale score sum	114.804	3	38.268	.314	.815
Scale score sum with reverse scores	10593.306	87	121.762		
	10708.110	90			
K10_r_sum	234.717	3	78.239	1.790	.155
	3846.718	88	43.713		
	4081.435	91			

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Comparing the Effect of Perceived Social Support from Ethnic Student Groups and Ethnic Churches on Distress among Korean International Students.

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Method

It is a survey study with Korean International students in a Midwestern University recruited via email and Facebook. Depending on whether or not participating in ethnic Korean student group activities or ethnic Korean church activities, the participants are divided into four group, the students participating in both student group activities and church activities (gropu1, both-goers), the students only participating in the student group activities (group2, student group goers), the students only participating in church activities (group3, church goer) as well as the students participating in neither the student group activities nor the church activities (gropu4, neither-goers). The perceived social support is measured via Social Provision Scale (SPS) and the distress level is measured using K10. ANOVA and Fisher's z transformation t test is used for data analysis.

Conclusions

The students participating in student group activities or church activities appears not to differ in perceived social support and distress level. In all four groups, the perceived social support predict significantly reduced distress, supporting the direct effect of social support reported in other studies. However, the direct effect did not differ between any of the four groups. Only group2 (student group goers) and gropu4 (neither-goers) show marginally significant difference in effect size, suggesting the social support may predict lower level of distress among the students only participating in the ethnic student group activities compared to the students participating in neither the student group nor the church activities. .